to promote economic cooperation between India and Israel, have been identified by an inter-ministerial Joint Study Group.

(d) Does not arise.

Implementation of SAFTA

757. SHRIMATI SUKHBUNS KAUR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state what steps have so far been taken by India and other South Asian countries towards implementation of the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) accord, item-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) Agreement is scheduled to come into force from 1 January, 2006. A Committee of Experts (COE), consisting of delegates from all Member States, have been negotiating on all outstanding issues pertaining to SAFTA, namely (1) Rules of Origin, (2) Sensitive List (3) Mechanism for Compensation of Revenue Loss for the Least Developed Contracting States (LDCS) (MCRL) and (4) Technical Assistance to LDCS (Technical Assistance). Matter regarding Technical Assistance has been finalized.

The final meeting of COE is going to be held from 29 Novemebr - 1 December, 2005 at Kathmandu to finalize the remaining outstanding issues.

Setting up of Inter-state Trade Council

758. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH:
SHRI T.T.V.DHINAKARAN:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has set up an Inter State Trade Council as announced in the Foreign Trade Policy this year;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) how many meetings of this Council have been held so far;

(d) whether any guidelines have been issued to State Government for promotion of trade; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN):(a) Yes, Sir. The Government has constituted the Inter-State Trade Council (ISTC) on 24th June, 2005.